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A

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN DUXBURY, AUGUST 31st, 1838,

ON OCCASION OF THE BURIAL OF

SAMUEL ALDEN FRAZER, ESQ.

BY JOSIAH MOORE.
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Published by Request.



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DISCOURSE.

MARK THE PERFECT MAN, AND BEHOLD THE UPRIGHT, FOR THE END
OF THAT MAN IS PEACE.—PSALM 37: 37.

WE come, my friends, to bury a man, in whose death our community has sustained a loss. He was not only a devoted husband, a good father, an affectionate brother; he was a generous friend, an upright magistrate, an enlightened and faithful citizen, an honest man. His burial, then, is an occasion on which our sympathies are called into action, not by reflected misfortune merely, but by actual participation in the sufferings of those who stood related to him by the ties of blood. A character like his is a page on the too often worthless record of human conduct, which ought not to pass unnoticed. It is one of those redeeming passages, which save the scroll from being cast away as valueless. Any thing, beyond the ordinary notice of the dead, is not advisable when there is nothing extraordinary to justify the distinction. Obituaries too often emanate from a desire, on the part of friends, to commemo-

rate their own regard for the deceased, or to extend their sympathy to those who have been afflicted in their loss; and when they are designed simply as a tribute of affection, or only amount to this, they are productive of no permanent good; their commonness takes away all value from the distinction; and, in consequence of bringing public notoriety within the verge of ordinary character, they rather lower the standard of excellence, and lessen the incitement to virtue. Their purpose should be, not the gratification of relatives or friends, but the good of the community. When they are the faithful transcript of character beyond the ordinary caste, they serve to make it known, where this is required, and give it additional influence where it is not. If we are justified in the use of fictitious narrative for the promotion of moral ends, we ought not, for a much stronger reason, to be prohibited the employment of truth for the same purpose. In doing this, we are not exposed to the questionable expediency of resorting to the false, for the illustration and enforcement of what is right and good; besides, truth has a living power over the mind, which fiction never can possess without converting it into a lie; nor then for any length of time. The mask will be torn off, the vesture will be changed, and the chances become great, that truth will lose more by lending her robe, than she will gain by the unholy alliance.

There needs, not only the testimony of individual sentiment, but the united and concentrated expres-

sion of that sentiment on the part of the community, to give due authority and influence to excellence. Before this is done, we may not know how far our own estimate is sustained by that of others ; and we fail to collect the scattered testimony, and build it up into a lasting monument. This unanimity of sentiment cannot be better exhibited and expressed, than by a general gathering at the burial of those whom we honor, and the public commemoration of their virtues. The presence of their earthly remains adds force and solemnity to the truth, and checks any unhallowed disposition to exaggeration or to envy.

So deserving was he, in whose funeral solemnities we have now met to join, of the distinction we would confer, that we trust no sentiment of jealousy will be fanned into life by the occasion ; and no one be found indisposed to unite in the respect which we come to testify. Example and circumstance are teacher and usher in the school of man ; and so important and active is the office of both, that it is difficult to say to which belongs precedence. The life of our departed friend has been a running commentary upon human duty ; he has filled the sphere in which he was appointed to act ; he has finished the work given him to do ;—a sphere, the most important, if not the most extensive ;—a work, the most arduous, if not the most honored. It may be easy to ascend the summit of fame in the estimation of the world, when but one class of virtues or faculties is called into exercise, and these stimulated by an undeviating motive ; but difficult to attain the same

eminence, when the straight and narrow way is serrated, as it were, with episodes, which are constantly calling the thoughts to some collateral duty. It may be easy to accomplish a few distinguished deeds, to gain the applause of the world, but difficult to pass through life, discharging all its humble offices with constancy and fidelity.

The same is true of character as of conduct. Of this we form an imperfect and unjust estimate. We reverence, too exclusively, mere intellectual power;—but the intellectual faculties constitute but half a man,—and, although he may gain applause by their exclusive development, he deserves not the name of greatness so richly as he who has called out all the noble capacities of his soul in their just relative proportion. God gives us the materials, out of which we are, as it were, to recreate ourselves in the formation of our characters, and he perverts their use and builds to folly, who narrows the foundation that he may add to the height;—we stand most firmly, and endure the longest, when we observe just proportions. Like the founders of Babel, most imagine that heaven is only in the zenith; but it is as broad as the illimitable horizon.

Though no signal deeds render remarkable the life of the subject of this notice, he has lived to the best of purposes. Knowing that his time and his talents were committed to him as a trust, by him whose eye he felt to be ever upon him, it was his purpose and his endeavor to use them as not abusing them; and occasion never offered when he could

not find something to do, of use to himself or to his fellow-men. He has lived beyond the assigned term of human existence ; yet few would look back upon the past with less to regret, or onward to the future, with more to hope. Possessed of great bodily soundness, fostered by habits of early rising, and regular and temperate living, he has been sustained through a long period of industry and enterprise, the records of which he found, where all like him will ever seek them, in the consciousness that his physical powers were devoted to the uses for which God designed them. He has not outlived their prostration. A life of inactivity would have been, to him, a life of pain. The angel came when his work was finished, and we trust has borne him to his reward on high.

He had a sound mind in a sound body ;—though a man of strong feelings, he always kept them in abeyance to reason. In consequence, he was, from acquired habit, cool and dispassionate in making up his judgment ; he seldom, therefore, found himself in the wrong. But when such was the case, he did not suffer prejudice or self-will to keep down the convictions of reason, or pride to usurp the place of candor in the confession of error ;—never suffering himself to become so identified with any subject, as to surrender his position as an honest inquirer after truth. A genius he would not have felt himself honored in being called ; we give him higher praise in saying, that he was a man of strong common sense. Had he received the advantages of a public

education, and devoted himself to the profession for which his talents and his tastes best fitted him, he might have had a place among the judges or the statesmen of the land. We do not allude to this circumstance, however, in regret; regarding as we do the sphere that he did fill, with so much credit to himself and advantage to others, as among the most useful and honorable in society; and the marks that he received of public confidence, are proof that he was not unappreciated in it by others.

In what has been said, there is no design of implying that he was an uneducated man; he had done much for himself in addition to the early advantages that he enjoyed, more than many, possessed of every faculty for acquiring knowledge. The most valuable kind of culture consists, not so much in mere acquisition, as in the discipline of the mind, calling into action its original powers;—the education of thought rather than of language. The study of books often serves as a convenient substitute for this; but, when too much use is made of them, they weaken the native capacities of the soul; the knowledge of books is to be used as an aid, not an end; and language as a vesture, not an apology for ideas. That man does better for himself and society, who is always active in searching for truth in man, in nature and events, than he who lives only in the recorded history of the past, and knows only what the printed page may have taught him. He may have the power of throwing the garb of language over borrowed thought; but, in real practical life, he may

not be so trustworthy as one who has studied to meet the wants of time as it passes, and whose mind and thoughts are his own ; who, like our friend, has only made reading the pastime, not the occupation of his life. When we measure the amount of real knowledge possessed by men of the class to whom he belonged, we find that it is but little that the educated, so called, excel them ; their supereminence is only that of the spires of a city above the mass of substantial masonry beneath and around them.

The deceased was an honest man ; too honest for his worldly interest in this shuffling age, but not too honest for his own peace of mind, or the good example of those around him. What treasures does the upright man lay up in his own soul, and what a measure of interest do they pay him in his declining hours ! Could those who are commencing life in the eager pursuit of wealth, and exposed to all its concomitant evils, be carried forward in vision to the period when the gray locks of age gather upon the head, and be placed upon a sick and dying bed, with their hoarded gains piled up around them, how many would exclaim, Let me rather die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his ! The subject of this notice, raised as he was above want, it is believed, might have been numbered among the wealthy, had he fallen in with the general habits of trade that have prevailed of late in the business intercourse of mankind ; but he chose rather to preserve his integrity, and leave to his children the richer inheritance of a spotless example.

The life of the deceased has run parallel with the most interesting period of his country's history ; and he has been no silent and inactive witness of what has been transpiring around him ; the love of liberty he inherited from his ancestors, whose names have been associated, from the first settlement of these shores, with the earnest and successful defenders of human rights. His father, with his family, was a resident at Boston during the eventful period of the breaking out of the Revolution, and among the earliest and strongest impressions of his youth, were his father's sacrifices and devotion to the cause of the patriots, and the tragedies that were daily enacted in the streets of the city. The example set him has not been dishonored ; the principles then instilled have had an abiding influence ; he has been a true lover of his country, a consistent, enlightened republican. He regarded it as a responsible duty to study and watch over the interests of the constitution and the government ; to keep along with the history of his times, by giving his attention to the prominent questions in agitation ; and he was always at his post, as every intelligent and faithful citizen should be, to raise his voice in defence, and cast his vote in support, of good measures and good men. It is upon such men as he has been, that the stability of government, the good order of society, the prosperity of the country depend. Too many are becoming indifferent to the calls of public duty, resting in willing ignorance of the most important and responsible questions on which they are required to act. Such

men are not true patriots, for they are putting in immediate jeopardy those very privileges and blessings under the enjoyment of which they are suffering themselves to be lulled to repose.

It was a maxim, upon which our esteemed fellow-citizen acted, that "Order is Heaven's first law." This he carried into all his habits. By having method in the government of his conduct, and in the appropriation of his time, he secured to himself many an hour for the enjoyment of retired meditation and reading. The morning's sun usually found him with his book; and by giving to reading the spare moments of the day and the evening, he had possessed himself of much information. Dissipation of time, and licentiousness in all its forms, met with his marked discountenance; though liberal and indulgent, within the limits of propriety, none were more prompt to rebuke any conduct that transgressed the bounds of morality, or savored of a spirit of insubordination to the wholesome restraints of society and law.

He felt, to an unusual degree, a paternal interest in those who were growing up around him, and countenanced, by his presence and his aid, institutions designed to promote sound learning, and lead the young in the path of duty and true happiness. He seemed to find much of his pleasure in promoting the benevolent movements of the day. This we attribute, in part at least, to the fact, that a desire of gain never acquired the ascendancy over him; his mind was consequently left free from its contracting tendencies, and his heart the more devoted to higher

and more satisfying pursuits. He felt deeply the want of a more thorough and enlarged system of education, and often spoke, in sorrowful regret, of the great want of interest, on the part of the young, in intellectual pursuits;—nothing gave him more pain than to see them wasting their time in idleness, or devoting it to unlawful pleasures. If there be any regard to his memory among the rising members of the community, towards all of whom he felt as a father, they will give heed to those good counsels which he so often imparted.

He was a social man, delighting in improving intercourse with his fellow-men, enjoying the flow of chastened mirth, or, which was more to his taste, engaging in the discussion of important subjects relating to schemes of utility or benevolence. He was possessed of great equanimity and habitual cheerfulness; prosperity was met with gratitude, and adversity borne with sustained and sober submission. He had studied human life as a philosopher, and he was prepared for its vicissitudes. We may sum up the whole in saying, that he was a good man, in the unrestricted sense of the term. His virtues were not mere outward manifestation; they emanated from well-defined and established principles. Humble in the estimate of himself, he made no boast of superior sanctity; he left his life to speak for itself, showing his faith by his works.

Religious gratitude was a ruling sentiment in his mind; he was a lover of nature in its general forms of beauty and grandeur, and he saw God in his

providence and in his works. A sense of the divine presence he always carried about with him, and perhaps we may say, that there was no motive which acted on him so strongly, as the impression that the eye of God was ever upon him. A feeling of dependence and accountability accompanied this impression, and became the foundation of that submissive, thankful mind, which neither adversity nor prosperity ever overcame. In his religious views he was influenced by no narrow prejudice or bigotry; he respected sincerity and purity of heart and life wherever he discovered them, and met the faithful and practical Christian of any denomination with frank and open-hearted fellowship. His own religious experience was of no hothouse growth; it was simple and natural; the power rather than the form of godliness. He was a firm believer in the truth of Christianity, and drew, as we believe, from the teachings and example of Christ, the rules by which he designed to govern his life. While he regarded the profession without the substance of religion as of little worth, he was nevertheless habitually, and from principle, observant of its outward forms and institutions. His constant attendance on the worship of God in his temple was proverbial; and there is no place where we shall more miss him, than in his accustomed seat in the house where we are now convened. He came here, not for novelty, not for the sake of mere appearance, but for his own good, and the good of others. How often has he made his way to the altar, through storm and tempest, when there was scarce else to bear witness to his

presence but the bare walls of the temple. Younger limbs were too feeble to reach the place; younger courage too irresolute to brave the elements, or, what we fear is more true, younger principle was too weak to follow in his steps. He was a man who promoted truth in his own place; he went not to seek it elsewhere, when the preacher or his doctrines were not in accordance with his wishes or sentiments. Among the first to understand and appreciate sound doctrine, he would be among the last to disturb the quiet of a parish when he felt that he did not hear it. He was too much of a practical Christian, to be over-sensitive with regard to those nice shades and distinctions, so much insisted on by the mere speculative believer.

We would not forget his disinterested benevolence, his self-sacrificing disposition; he was ever more considerate for others than for himself, obliging even to the extent of much inconvenience to himself; charitable to those whose wants made them deserving objects of commiseration; kind to all in sickness and affliction, not only in extending to them his sympathy, but in sending all the little comforts within his command. His philanthropy was not merely a principle; it was a feeling inwrought into his very life and character. His benevolence sprang from the deep places of his soul in spontaneous exuberance; every call for charity, forgiveness, sympathy, love, found a ready response in his affections.

Of his conjugal, paternal and brotherly feelings, his interest in his connections and immediate family, there is scarce occasion to speak. We have evi-

dence of their strength and influence in the respect that is paid to his remains ; we have had it in the devotion with which his sick and dying bed has been attended ; and we trust that the cheerful, grateful feelings with which that devotion was received and acknowledged, and the good counsels with which it was repaid, will never be forgotten. The most enduring and the most acceptable monument that the members of his family can build to his memory will be, to sustain in themselves that character which was the object of his solicitude, and of which he has set them so worthy an example. They have our sympathy in their great loss ; for we feel that the town has been deprived of a father.

During the season of his decline, he manifested far more interest for others than for himself. On his own account he was willing, nay desirous, to depart ; and submitted with great patience to all his sufferings. He was pained to witness the symptoms of decay and death, only when he witnessed the grief that they caused to those to whom he had been long and ardently attached. While we mingle our sorrows with those, who in his death have been deprived of the staff on which they have rested, we would hope that that Christian faith and fortitude, on which he depended, may be found sufficient for their support, until God shall send the summons for them to meet him in the world of spirits. Of that world he had no doubt ; he felt that the present is incomplete without the future. This belief strengthened and cheered him in the prospect before him.

Death seemed deprived of all terror; it was hailed rather as an angel of mercy, come to remove him, when his measure was full, his work finished, and his presence on earth no longer required.

It is seldom that the close of life is met with equal fortitude and magnanimity. He died as he had lived, a Christian philosopher, resigned to the will of God, and satisfied that his will should be done. He requires no further service at our hands, but to commit his remains with respect to the tomb. But though dead, may he yet long speak to us! May we cherish and imitate his virtues; may we be preparing ourselves, by every good word and work, for that support, in the last hours of life, which so firmly sustained him! Would the young be useful in life, honored in death, and blessed in immortality; let them study, like him, to be faithful citizens, consistent Christians, honest men. Would those, upon whom devolve the responsible duties and offices of society, escape unscathed from temptation; like him, let them hold fast their integrity. Would the aged meet death with firmness; like him, let them contemplate it in its advances, by setting their houses in order, and meet it, when it comes, with resignation.

A

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN DUXBURY, AUGUST 31ST, 1838,

ON OCCASION OF THE BURIAL OF

SAMUEL ALDEN FRAZER, ESQ.

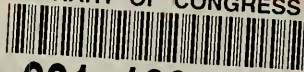
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